

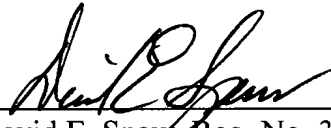
REMARKS

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the application by the present Amendment. If clarification of the amendment or application is desired, or if issues are present which the Examiner believes may be quickly resolved, the Examiner is invited to initiate a telephone interview with the undersigned attorney to expedite prosecution of the present application.

If there are any additional fees resulting from this communication, please charge same to our Deposit Account No. 18-0160, our Order No. FRR-12655.

Respectfully submitted,

RANKIN, HILL, PORTER & CLARK LLP

By: 
David E. Spaw, Reg. No. 34732

700 Huntington Building
925 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44115-1405
(216) 566-9700
Customer No. 007609

Attachment: Marked-up version of Amendments

IN THE CLAIMS:

The claims have been amended as follows:

1. (Amended) ~~{Process}~~ A process for ~~{the}~~ operation of an active electro-optical filtering device with an active optical filter element (1), ~~{characterized in that}~~ wherein the optical filter element (1) is driven with anti-polar drive pulses, whereby the optical filter element (1) is short-circuited between two successive drive pulses.
2. (Amended) ~~{Process}~~ The process in accordance with claim 1, ~~{characterized in that the}~~ wherein short-circuit times (t_{s1} , t_{s2}) are shorter~~[, preferably]~~ by factors in the order of magnitude of 10^3 to $10^{7\frac{1}{2}}$ than ~~{the}~~ time durations (t_+ , t_-) of the drive pulses.
3. (Amended) ~~{Process}~~ The process in accordance with claim 1 ~~for 2, characterized in that the~~, wherein a framework frequency (f) of the drive pulses amounts to between 0.01 and 1 Hz.
4. (Amended) ~~{Process for the operation of an active electro-optical filtering device with an active optical filter element (1), in preference in accordance with one of the claims 1-3, characterized in that}~~ The process in accordance with claim 1, wherein an operating voltage (U_{LC}) is applied to the optical filter element at which operating voltage (U_{LC}) the scattered light term (φ_{IR}) of the optical filter element (1) is smaller than or equal to ~~{the}~~ a transmission term of the optical filter element (1).
5. (Amended) ~~{Process in accordance}~~ The process in with claim 4, ~~{characterized in that}~~ wherein the operating voltage (U_{LC}) lies several times above ~~{the}~~ a Fréedericksz-threshold of the optical filter element (1).
6. (Amended) ~~{Active}~~ An active electro-optical filtering device~~[, which can be operated with the process in accordance with one of the claims 1-5,]~~ that is adapted for operation in accordance with the process of claim 1, said filtering device containing at least one active optical filter element (1) with a liquid crystal, electronic means (2) for driving the at

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least one active filter element (1), a light sensor (4) operating in conjunction with the electronic means (2) and electric power supply means (5), in particular a solar cell, for the electronic means (2) and the at least one optical filter element (1), ~~{characterized in that}~~ and wherein the liquid crystal is implemented in accordance with ~~{one of the following technologies}~~ a technology selected from the group consisting of: TN-technology, STN-technology, dichroic technology, ferro-electric technology ~~{or}~~ and π -Mode-LCD-technology.

7. (Amended) ~~{Drive}~~ The drive circuit (2) for an active electro-optical filtering device in accordance with claim 6, ~~{characterized by}~~ further comprising a switch (S₁)~~{,}~~ with which the active optical filter element (1) can be short-circuited.

IN THE ABSTRACT:

The Abstract of the Disclosure has been amended as follows:

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

An ~~{The}~~ active optical filtering device~~{, which is suitable in particular as a dazzleprotection device for utilization}~~ useful for a dazzle-protection device in welding protection masks, ~~{-}helmets~~ ~~{or-}~~ and goggles, is equipped ~~{in an as such known manner}~~ with a light protection filter ~~{with}~~ having at least one active optical filter element and with an electronic circuit for controlling the active filter element ~~{as well as with}~~. The device also has a light sensor operating in conjunction with the electronic circuit and an electric power supply, in particular a solar cell, for the electronic circuit and the active filter element. The driving circuit for the active filter element is implemented ~~{in}~~ such ~~{a manner,}~~ that, in the range of the framework frequency (1/T) of 0.01 to 1 Hz, the load capacitor is briefly completely discharged~~{, as}~~. As a result ~~{of which}~~, the power demand is halved in comparison with known circuits. Simultaneously the operating voltage (U) is situated within a range, which is quantitatively defined and within which the scattered light proportion of the liquid crystal

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display utilized is minimal ~~{as a result of this definition.}~~.

~~{(Figure 3)}~~

ACTIVE ELECTRO-OPTICAL FILTERING DEVICE AND PROCESS FOR OPERATING IT

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The invention concerns an active electro-optical filtering device and a process for operating it in accordance with the generic terms of the independent claims. The filtering device is suitable in particular as a dazzle protection device for utilization in welding protection masks, -helmets or -goggles.

DESCRIPTION OF RELATED ART

[0002] Filtering devices of ~~this~~ the aforementioned type are known, e.g., from the documents WO 97/15254, US-5,315,099 or EP-0 550 384. As active filter elements, they typically contain at least one liquid crystal cell (liquid-crystal-cell, LC-cell), which blocks the light transmission to a greater or lesser extent, as soon as a light sensor is impinged with a light intensity which exceeds a predefined threshold level. The utilization of such filtering devices is many and diverse; a typical example is the use as viewing window for welding protection masks, -helmets and -goggles.

[0003] The filtering devices described in the documents mentioned consist of active filter elements, for example made of 0-90° rotating nematic liquid crystal elements, which are located between two crossed polarizers. They are operated with an operating voltage which lies several times above the Fréedericksz threshold. Designated as Fréedericksz-threshold is the driving voltage of a liquid crystal cell at which a first optical activity of the cell can be observed. The choice of a higher operating voltage is justified in the above mentioned documents with a reduction of the scattered light produced, a reduced dependence on temperature of the electro-optical effect and the creation of an optical transmission of less than 1 %.

[0004] The driving frequency of active filter elements like this, for reasons of a low power

demand, lies between 0 and 32 Hz. Mentioned as the main reason for the limited availability of electric supply power is the operation of the filter elements using electricity from support/buffer batteries and solar cells. While continuous direct current operation today still damages liquid crystal cells through electrolysis and ion migration or else strongly impairs their optical performance capacity, by continuous improvement of the insulating layers, by the reduction of impurities and by the achievement of higher electric conductance values of the liquid crystal substances utilized significant progress has been achieved. The choice of an as low as possible driving frequency is strived for, because the drive frequency has a linear effect on the power demand of a liquid crystal cell. It would, however, be desirable to reduce the power demand even further.

[0005] Two values characteristic for such electro-optical filtering devices are of particular significance in this context: the transmission and the scattering. Requirements of these values are laid down in various product standards, e.g., EN 166, EN 167, EN 169 or EN 379. The European standard EN 169 prescribes within which range the transmission T may lie in case of various welding processes. In doing so, a protection level number

$$[0006] \quad N = 1 - (7/3) \log T \quad (1)$$

[0007] is introduced. Permissible scattered light for active filter elements are defined in the European standard EN 379. In doing so, the reduced scattered light coefficient is defined as follows:

$$[0008] \quad I^* = (1 / \omega)(\varphi_{1R} - \varphi_{2R}) / \varphi_{1L}, \quad (2)$$

[0009] whereby

[0010] ω is the spatial angle,

[0011] $(\varphi_{1R} - \varphi_{2R})$ is the scattered light flow of the test sample in the defined spatial angle (minus the scattered light proportion of the measuring installation) and

[0012] φ_{1L} is the unscattered light flow of the test sample (zero diffraction order).

[0013] In the case of known electro-optical filtering devices, the optical quality is strongly impaired by scattered light. The light scatter on an LC-cell has various causes: ~~amongst~~

among others, particles enclosed in the LC-cell, differing layer thicknesses, scratches, edges and/or spacers between the glass plates enclosing the liquid crystal.

[0014] US-3,961,840 shows a device for triggering of display elements for watches and portable computers. These display elements are not optical filtering elements in the sense of the invention disclosed here.

[0015] US-4,279,474 shows sunglasses with LCD-elements. The LCD-elements are for shading the glasses.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0016] It is ~~the task~~ an object of the invention to create an active electro-optical filtering device and to indicate a process for its operation, in the case of which an as low as possible operating voltage is required and nonetheless a good optical quality, in particular an as small as possible impairment of it due to light scattering, is achieved.

[0017] ~~The task is solved by the filtering device and by the process as defined in the independent claims. For the reduction of~~ For reducing the power demand of the liquid crystal cell, the electro-optical filtering device in accordance with the invention is in preference equipped with a special driving circuit. The driving circuit in accordance with the invention contains a switch, which in every half-period short-circuits the liquid crystal cell for a certain time period. Therefore, neither a continuous trigger circuit nor a continually changing drive voltage is chosen. The drive in accordance with the invention differs from the state of the art by the insertion of an active flank and a drive process, which instead of to a continuous frequency, corresponds rather more to a pulse width modulation. The framework frequency of the driving pulses lies in the range of 0.01 to 1 Hz. The energy requirement with this process is halved in comparison with the state of the art, which represents an enormous progress.

[0018] The invention presented here utilizes an operating voltage which is unequivocally defined. On the one hand, it is several times above the Fréedericksz-threshold, in order to achieve the optical density prescribed in the product standard EN 169. In addition, the operating voltage is defined in such a manner, that it lies at the voltage, at which the light scattered by the LCD display is minimal.

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[0019] The definition of the operating voltage in accordance with the invention consists in the finding that a minimum of scattered light is achieved, when in the scattered light equation (2) the numerator (essentially φ_{1R}) is smaller or else the same value as the denominator (φ_{1L}). In other words this signifies: if the scattered light proportion φ_{1R} in the operating point of the liquid crystal display is adjusted to be smaller than or equal to the residual transmission $T = 10^{(3/7)(1-N)}$, then the operating voltage has been selected as optimized with respect to scattered light. Operating frequencies defined in such a manner according to experience lie in the range of 10 to 50 Volt. The adjusting of the residual transmission can, for example, be solved with a small offset of the polarizer orientation or with an adaptation of the polarization efficiency. The scattered light influence of the measuring installation (φ_{2R}) has been neglected in the above discussion.

[0020] ~~{In the following, the invention is described in detail on the basis of Figures. These illustrate:}~~

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0021] ~~{Fig. 1}~~ These and further features of the invention will be apparent with reference to the following description and drawings, wherein:

[0022] Fig. 1 is a filtering device in accordance with the invention executed as a dazzle protection device,

[0023] Fig. 2 is an equivalent circuit diagram of a control circuit in accordance with the invention,

[0024] Fig. 3 is the operating voltage in function of time for a preferred embodiment of the operating process and

[0025] Fig. 4 shows the reduced radiant luminance in function of the operating voltage.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0026] In Figure 1, a filtering device in accordance with the invention designed as a dazzle

protection device is illustrated. It contains at least one active optical filter element 1 with a liquid crystal. The liquid crystal is implemented in accordance with one of the following technologies: TN-technology, STN-technology, dichroic technology, ferro-electric technology or π -Mode-LCD-technology. Apart from this, the filtering device contains electronic means 2 for driving the active filter element 1. At least one light sensor 4 acts in conjunction with the electronic means 2. Brought to the electronic means 2 are, for example, output signals of the light sensors 4 for the purpose of controlling, resp., closed-circuit controlling the operating voltage of the filter element. For the electronic means 2, the optical filter element 1 and possibly the light sensors 4, electric power supply means 5 are foreseen. These can be implemented, ~~[e.g.]~~ for example, as solar cells.

[0027] It is advantageous to equip the electronic means 2 with a driving circuit, as is schematically illustrated in Figure 2. With this, the power demand of the liquid crystal cell 1 can be significantly reduced. The liquid crystal on the equivalent circuit diagram of Fig. 2 is represented by a resistor R_{LC} and a capacitor C_{LC} . Other resistors in the circuit are combined in the resistors R_{S1} and R_{S2} . An alternating current source 21 supplies an alternating current U_{ω} with a framework frequency f of typically 0.01 to 1 Hz. The drive circuit in accordance with the invention contains a switch S_1 , which short-circuits the liquid crystal cell for a certain time period t_s . This effects the complete discharge of the capacitor C_{LC} . The energy required for the anti-polar charging of the capacitor C_{LC} with this drive circuit is therefore halved in comparison with the state of the art.

[0028] Figure 3 shows the operating voltage $U(t)$ supplied by the drive circuit in accordance with Fig. 2 in function of the time t . In a time period T with a typical duration of 1 to 100 sec, initially during a first time interval t_+ a, for example, positive voltage $+|U_{LC}|$ is applied to the liquid crystal cell 1. Thereafter, e.g., by closing the switch S_1 (refer to Fig. 2), during a second time interval t_{s1} the liquid crystal cell 1 is short-circuited. During a third time interval t_{-} thereupon a, for example, negative voltage $-|U_{LC}|$ is applied to the liquid crystal cell 1, whereupon during a fourth time interval t_{s2} once again a short-circuit takes place. In this manner, therefore active flanks 31, 32 are inserted into the course of the operating voltage $U(t)$. This drive process in accordance with the invention corresponds most likely to a pulse width modulation. The framework frequency $f = 1/T$ of the driving pulses lies in the range of

[0031] I. For low operating voltages U , φ_{IR} is $< \varphi_{IL}$, therefore l^* is < 1 . In this first range I, φ_{IL} is reduced more strongly with increasing U than φ_{IR} , for which reason $l^*(U)$ increases monotonously.

- [0032] II. For medium operating voltages U , φ_{IR} is $\approx \varphi_{IL}$, therefore I^* is ≈ 1 . In this second range II, $I^*(U)$ is approximately constant.
- [0033] III. For high operating voltage U , once again $\varphi_{IR} < \varphi_{IL}$ is applicable, therefore $I^* < 1$. In this third range III, φ_{IL} is reduced only a little with increasing U or is approximately constant, while on the contrary φ_{IR} for the reasons mentioned above still reduces, for which reason $I^*(U)$ is monotonously reduced.
- [0034] In accordance with the invention, the operating voltage $U = U_{LC}$ is selected in such a manner that the following conditions are fulfilled:
- [0035] a) The required transmission is achieved;
- [0036] b) The reduced radiant luminance coefficient I^* is minimal.
- [0037] The operating voltage U_{LC} is determined from this as follows. The condition a) defines a band on the U -axis in which the operating voltage U_{LC} has to be in order to achieve the required transmission. In this band thereupon, in accordance with condition b), the operating voltage U_{LC} is unequivocally determined, so that I^* becomes minimal. Normally the operating point U_{LC} is situated in the third range III of the curve $I^*(U)$.
- [0038] If so required, the transmission can be adjusted by a slight rotation relative to one another of the polarizers or by an adaptation of the polarizer efficiency.
- [0039] The present invention has been described herein with particularity, but it is noted that the scope of the invention is not limited thereto. Rather, the present invention is considered to be possible of numerous modifications, alterations, and combinations of parts and, therefore, is only defined by the claims appended hereto.